

Voting Rights Statements

Norton Statements, Columns, and News Releases on Voting Rights and Full Congressional Representation

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

Roll Call, February 13, 2006

Thank you for supporting a House vote for D.C. (N.J. and D.C., February 1, 2006) and for reminding everyone that we had won that right, at least in the Committee of the Whole, by rule. Shamefully, Republicans erased even this right, although approved by the federal courts, when they took control in 1995. We won this first-ever floor vote for D.C. residents after I submitted a legal memorandum to the House, perhaps the best evidence that, like Roll Call, I am always on a hunt for any "feasible alternative" to obtain equal rights for my constituents.

Like any Member who has the major responsibility for an issue, I have my own bill, H.R. 398 — the No Taxation Without Representation Act, that I am urging Members to cosponsor. This bill expresses what D.C. taxpaying citizens, who have fought and died in every U.S. war, deserve and what D.C.'s only Member of Congress has an obligation to sponsor. However, I would welcome a House vote, and Rep. Tom Davis and I have worked closely together on ways to surmount the considerable obstacles that still stand in the way of his House-only D.C. voting rights bill that pairs Democratic D.C. with Republican Utah for new House seats.

Rep. Tom DeLay's mid-decade Texas redistricting spoiled the opportunity for significant support from Democrats for the Davis bill, for fear of another round of partisan redistricting. However, the real obstacles have had nothing to do with Democrats. The issues are too numerous to list here but include two factors that unintentionally destroy the bill's most attractive Utah-D.C. parity feature — 1) that only D.C. retains its vote after the next census, and 2) Utah's population growth now qualifies that state for two seats on its own. Moreover, there are objections even among some local Utah Republican legislators to a congressional mandate that the Utah seat be at-large to avoid a redistricting controversy, as well as a slew of other structural and political issues. Most important, the considerable political will and cooperation it would take to build on Rep. Davis' innovative bill has been blocked by the Republican leadership, so anxious about the margin of their majority that they could not be less interested in making this a win-win proposal

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NORTON CELEBRATES 1965 VOTING RIGHTS ACT BREAKTHROUGH AND ASKS SAME FOR D.C.

August 5, 2005

Washington, DC — Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today said that the best way for Congress to celebrate "the truly historic accomplishments of the 1965 Voting Rights Acts on the 40th anniversary" on Saturday, August 7th, is to reauthorize the Act, key provisions of which expire in 2007. However, Norton said, "Even if the 1965 Act is reauthorized without difficulty, there will be serious, unfinished civil rights business for our country until the No Taxation Without Representation Act for the District of Columbia is enacted. Equal rights means equal representation for everyone, including Americans who live in the nation's capital." Norton's D.C. voting rights bill, sponsored in the Senate by Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), "does for D.C. residents what the Voting Rights Act did for disenfranchised Blacks and Hispanics," she said. Like other Washingtonians who went South to work for voting rights, Norton said that she has taken from that experience the lesson that "bottom-up grass roots determination is necessary to break through injustices with which the country has grown comfortable."

Norton said that the Act's abolition of practices such as literacy tests and violent intimidation made it one of the most important statutes in American history because of its "transforming effects on American democracy." Maryland and Virginia are among the southern states covered by the Act, but D.C., which was also a Southern segregationist jurisdiction, escaped coverage Norton said, sardonically, "because nobody could vote here anyway."

The Congresswoman said that despite 1965 Act's breakthrough in bringing black and white Southerners to near registration and voting parity, reauthorization is not certain. Some parts of the Act are permanent, but the special

provisions, among them clearance of any local changes in voting procedures by the Justice Department and the requirement of bilingual provisions, expire unless they are reauthorized by 2007. Norton said, "The Act has had tough sledding, especially from Republican administrations and the Supreme Court. Its original strength has been maintained largely because of the insistence of a Democratic controlled Congress. "It will take hard work to keep the Act from being weakened," she said.

Norton, who heads federal judicial nominations for the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), said that she was "deeply concerned that unexpectedly, equality issues and civil rights for people of color and women are emerging as the most controversial issues in the upcoming nomination hearings of Justice John Roberts for the Supreme Court. "As we embark upon another tough battle for the 1965 Voting Rights Act, we are faced with a nominee who has advised narrowing the Act," she said. "I believe we will succeed in renewing the Act, but we are guaranteed help neither in Congress nor in the Supreme Court," Norton said that she was preparing questions on civil rights for the CBC to submit to the Judiciary Committee.

The tough remedial sections of the Act that restrict states and local jurisdictions with a history of discrimination are not permanent but "they are there to accomplish a purpose and that purpose has not been adequately met yet, as the 2000 and 2004 elections make especially clear," Norton said. "The country spent almost 200 years engaged in deliberate, official actions to keep black people from voting. No one should be surprised that 40 years have not been long enough to sufficiently overcome such deep-seated injustice. In the District, we will be first in line to support reauthorization. We know better than most that no right is more basic in a democracy than the vote, whether for blacks living in Southern states or Americans of every background living in their own capital."

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NORTON RELEASES LETTER TO INTERNATIONAL DELEGATES ASKING THEM TO BECOME MESSENGERS TO THE WORLD FOR D.C. VOTING RIGHTS

July 5, 2005

Washington, DC--From the closing meeting in Washington of an international organization of 55 nations, where she has been a U.S. delegate, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today released a letter to delegates thanking them for including a section calling on Congress to give equal congressional voting rights to D.C. residents. In her letter to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) delegates, she wrote that most people in other countries, like most Americans, are unaware of this human rights violation. "Armed with our provision in the Washington Declaration," she asked delegates to "become messengers to the world." She wrote: "This denial is so astonishing, particularly for a world power insisting on the spread of democracy worldwide, that when it becomes better known, it will fall."

The full text of Congresswoman Norton's letter to each delegate follows.

I want to thank you for your support of the provision for equal voting rights in the U.S. Congress for the American citizens who live in Washington, D.C., our nation's capital, which is now part of the Washington Declaration. You have given great encouragement to the more than 600,000 residents of the District of Columbia, who are citizens, pay the same taxes as other Americans, and have fought and died in every war since the United States was established. We are seeking international support to move forward on an issue that has resisted remediation by the U.S. Congress despite two centuries of protests and false starts. Now the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE has joined the Organization of American States (OAS) Human Rights Commission, which, in February 2004, found denial of voting representation in the U.S. Congress to be a violation of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.

Our great frustration has been that even most Americans are unaware that the residents of the nation's capital are treated unequally, but we are gratified that polls show that Americans overwhelmingly support equal voting rights for D.C. residents. Most Europeans and other people in the world also are likely unaware of this denial.

Armed with our provision in the Washington Declaration, we hope that you will become messengers to the world, helping in educating and informing people that the United States is the only democratic country in the world that denies the residents of its capital representation in its national legislature. This denial is so astonishing, particularly for a world power insisting on the spread of democracy worldwide, that when it becomes better known, it will fall.

The origins of this denial are complex and the reasons for its survival for more than 200 years shift—parochial, partisan, and even racial—as causes for congressional inaction. We are certain that action will occur when the rest of the world knows that this denial of human rights is embedded in our country and when it is exposed. The Washington Declaration can become an important instrument for the full freedom of the citizens of the nation's capital if you help spread the word about the congressional voting rights provision of the Washington Declaration. For your support and your part in helping us raise the consciousness of the world to this human rights issue, we are profoundly grateful.

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NORTON APPLAUDS DAVIS BILL AND RISING BIPARTISANSHIP ON D.C. VOTING RIGHTS

May 3, 2005

Washington, DC--Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) issued the following statement on the voting rights bill reintroduced by Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) today.

"My thanks to Representative Tom Davis and his cosponsors for introducing his D.C. voting rights bill today for the second time. Tom's bill has helped raise awareness that voting rights must never be a partisan matter. That is the strong message as well of the D.C. voting rights bills introduced by Representatives Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) and Ralph Regula (R-OH), and I hope and expect that they will reintroduce their bills this session as well. The more bills the merrier has real meaning for D.C. voting rights, and Tom's bill today and the others are important signs of progress.

"Many thanks as well to Tom and our two other Republican colleagues, who joined me in March in sending a Dear Colleague to all House Members reporting a nationwide DC Vote poll that showed that, regardless of political party, region, ethnicity or gender, 82 percent of Americans support equal voting rights for D.C. citizens.

"When added to the No Taxation Without Representation Act that Senator Joe Lieberman and I simultaneously introduced in January, D.C. again will have four bills on the same subject, and multiple bills on voting rights or on any issue before the Congress always signals rising interest and movement forward. Having met our responsibility to stake out and maintain the entitlement of D.C. residents to equal representation, Senator Lieberman and I will continue to work with Tom and the other voting rights sponsors to seize the first opportunity to achieve the strongest bill we can."

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THE DISTRICT'S CONSTANT CAUSE
ANORTON OP-ED IN THE WASHINGTON POST
September 12, 2004

The District's long struggle for democracy leads some people to wonder if we will ever get there. We will, but the activism of residents must be guided by unvarnished, accurate information—a purpose not served by Mark Plotkin's Aug. 22 Outlook piece "Look Who's Rallying for D.C.'s Cause."

Plotkin praised Republicans for trying to get D.C. voting rights back in their platform, while admonishing Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry and Democratic House Leader Nancy Pelosi (Calif.) "to show some support for the idea of representation in the House." Both have been leading advocates of voting rights and statehood. I was charged me with ditching my own constituents.

Says Plotkin, who claims to know, we are ignoring the "desires and aspirations" of D.C. residents for passage of Rep. Tom Davis's (R-Va.) bill for a District a vote in the House—but not the Senate—as an incremental step toward democracy.

I have worked closely with Davis on his bill, and I have welcomed two other voting rights bills by Republican colleagues, because these bills mark the first bipartisan support for D.C. voting rights since passage of the voting rights constitutional amendment 30 years ago. The first step toward acceptable legislation is to achieve consensus on the necessity for voting rights. Then we can work toward a bill we all can support. Abandoning my bill for full voting rights—that has strong citizen support—for the Davis bill or the other Republican-sponsored bills would senselessly give up my leverage to get the best D.C. bill.

My approach already has been vindicated by changes in the Davis bill. All three GOP bills involved Maryland. I worked with Davis, and he later dropped his original version, which made the District a voting district that included Maryland residents in favor of a stand-alone D.C. district.

However, Davis's idea to eliminate Republican opposition by giving a vote to the Democratic District and to Republican Utah, which barely missed getting an additional House seat in the last census, has been overwhelmed by two events.

First, for the first time in history, Republicans in Texas and Colorado overturned lawful redistricting to redistrict again, as The Post noted, in an undisguised "abhorrent" attempt "to wipe out moderate and white Democrats"; [The Soviet Republic of Texas, editorial, Oct. 14, 2003]. This outrage killed any chance that Democrats would trust Republicans to play fair on the redistricting necessitated by the Davis bill.

The fatal flaw, however, was demographics, not politics. Utah Rep. Chris Cannon (R) told the Salt Lake City Tribune,

"Why would we fool around with a seat now when we are going to get one, and possibly two, after the next census anyway?" The latest census figures seem to support his claim. The truth is that the Davis bill never had a chance with the Republicans. They repeatedly have refused to return my less-valuable House vote in the Committee of the Whole. Davis's bill still belongs on the table, of course, but it has no greater chance of passage than my bill for the full voting representation favored by D.C. residents.

Plotkin's screed that I took statehood out of the Democratic platform also is untrue. I never will give up on statehood, because statehood alone gives the District House and Senate votes and eliminates congressional interference in its business. However, my colleagues have told me that our voting rights bill is surrounded by confusion. Consequently, because the Democratic platform is a national document, I tried using the same broad wording that commonly defines statehood—"equal rights to democratic self-government"; joined with "congressional representation for the citizens of the nation's capital";

My statehood bill, which I got two-thirds of the Democrats and one Republican to support in a 1993 House vote, is one of my most important congressional achievements. I would be pressing statehood today if the District had not temporarily given up state functions to recover from insolvency.

We may need to find better ways to sort out the confusion about what the District wants now, but sowing division among people on the same side is not one of them.

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NORTON SAYS FOUR VOTING RIGHTS BILLS OPEN NEWS CHAPTER OF BIPARTISAN COOPERATION THAT CAN HASTEN VOTING RIGHTS

June 23, 2004

Washington, DC—At an unprecedented hearing today on four D.C. voting rights bills, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton said that the hearing and the bills discussed marked the return of bipartisan support for the first time since congressional passage of the D.C. Voting Rights Amendment 30 years ago. The hearing considered Norton's No Taxation Without Representation Act, and three bills filed by senior Republicans-Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA), Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA). Norton said, "Considering the recent partisan history of D.C. voting rights in the Congress, the return to bipartisanship, even with sharply different bills, is a major step and the indispensable predicate to achieving our rights."

Among witnesses at today's hearing were: Representatives Regula and Rohrabacher, Mayor Tony Williams, Council Chair Linda Cropp, Wade Henderson of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, Ilir Zherka of DC Vote, Betsy W. Werronen, Chairman, D.C. Republican Committee, and Ted Trabue of the Greater Washington Board of Trade.

Norton welcomed all four bills because the filing of bills by members of both parties "substantially and undeniably advances" the voting rights cause. However, the Congresswoman said she intends to hold a town meeting to facilitate deeper understanding of all four approaches by residents. She gave examples of questions that will be raised, including whether H.R. 3709, which treats D.C. residents as Maryland citizens for representation purposes is constitutional in light of the requirement that representatives be inhabitants of the state in which they are selected, and whether H.R. 4640 the House-only bill continues to be politically neutral in light of the major redistricting battles to deprive Democrats of their seats and the constitutional difficulty of guaranteeing that individual members of the Utah legislature, the state in question, would adhere to such an agreement yet to be sought there. Norton said that she believed that today's hearing was not only the appropriate way to begin to answer these questions, but also "an important breakthrough in the struggle for full representation." She said that she would relish the opportunity to get a full House vote on her watch, but felt an obligation to first ensure that the House vote is a constitutional and pragmatic possibility, and to design a specific strategy to achieve Senate representation. "There is almost nothing I can't do in the House, particularly given my voting rights in the committee where all of the action is," she said. "The District's fundamental disempowerment is in the Senate."

The full text of Norton's statement follows.

I begin by expressing my deep appreciation to Chairman Tom Davis for the attention and commitment he has given to D.C. voting rights since coming to Congress. In his Caucus, the Chairman has tried to achieve the return of the delegate vote in the Committee of the Whole by the Majority, and now he has introduced his own bill, H.R. 4640, for full voting rights in the House. Representative Ralph Regula, who previously served on the D.C. Appropriation subcommittee, has introduced H.R. 381, a bill for full voting rights in the House and Senate. Rep Dana Rohrabacher, who served on the old D.C. subcommittee, has introduced, H.R. 3709 for full voting rights in the House and Senate.

District residents have consistently insisted upon equal rights in Congress since 1801, when the ten-year transition of the land donated by Maryland and Virginia was completed, Congress took jurisdiction over the District of Columbia, and

by refusing to act, stripped America citizens living in the new capital of rights they had always enjoyed in common with other citizens. This denial of now more than 200 years betrayed the intention of the constitutional framers, who were careful to leave these rights in place during the transition years.

My own efforts, joined by many in the House and Senate, are the most recent of many attempts ever since to return to the original intent of the framers. The two most important, for the support they have received from Congress, are the statehood bill, the New Columbia Admission Act of 1993 and the current congressional voting rights bill. In 1993, there was a historic two-day debate on the statehood bill on the House floor, and in a final vote of the full House, almost two-thirds of the Democrats and one Republican voted for the bill. However, thereafter, the District became insolvent, and in order to recover, turned over some state costs to the federal government, making statehood impossible for now. I then introduced the No Taxation Without Representation Act because whether or not the city carried all state costs, the District contributes the second highest rate of taxes to support our government, and residents have fought and died in every war, more than qualifying them for full voting rights in the House and Senate.

The significance of today's hearing should not be lost. None of the bills before us has anything close to the necessary support in Congress, and all raise a plethora of questions to be answered. The process we embark upon today is one of steps not leaps. The importance of today's hearing is this. It represents the most important breakthrough for congressional voting rights in more than 30 years because it marks the first bipartisan support for D.C. Congressional voting rights since the Congress passed a voting rights amendment to give the District of Columbia a House seat and two seats in the Senate. Before us today are not only my bill, the No Taxation Without Representation Act but three other D.C. voting rights bills filed by senior Republicans, who all enjoy great respect in the House. Considering the recent partisan history of D.C. voting rights in the Congress, with the introduction of only Democratic supported bills, the return to bipartisanship, even with sharply different bills, is a major step and the indispensable predicate to achieving those rights. Until now we have lacked the consensus we have now achieved on principle of voting representation itself. With these bills we acknowledge across party lines that the denial of congressional voting rights to the residents of the nation's capital is not compatible with American democracy. When members of both parties file bills on the same underlying subject, the cause itself is substantially and undeniably advanced.

Some of these bills may not be as familiar as others to the general public or the press but because my constituents communicate regularly with me on voting rights, I am quite aware that all four approaches enjoy some support among D.C. residents. However, far greater exposure to all of these approaches is necessary because most residents have little more than surface-level knowledge of these bills because they have had to draw their views from a title or one line summary of a bill. Today's hearing is a good beginning to inform and educate residents and local elected officials and I also intend to hold a Town Meeting to facilitate deeper knowledge of all four approaches.

As immensely grateful as I am for these bills, I have not endorsed or co-sponsored any of them except my own. To do so at this time would be premature. None of the sponsors suggest that these bills are ripe, that residents are familiar with their contents, or that they do not raise fair questions that remain unanswered. D.C. residents and elected officials are entitled to much more information that ranges from the constitutional to the pragmatic. The questions that may be raised about the No Taxation Without Representation Act are better known, but here are a sample of questions about each of the three other bills. Is H.R. 381 the retrocession bill, which requires Maryland to agree to the return of the District, achievable politically as a practical matter? Is H.R. 3709, which treats D.C. residents as Maryland citizens for representation purposes constitutional in light of the requirement in Article I of the Constitution specifically requiring that representatives be inhabitants of the state in which they are selected? Can Congress grant House-only representation to American citizens and does H.R. 4640 the House-only bill continue to have the one Democrat—one Republican symmetry that is the reason it appeared to be viable in the first place, considering the bitter redistricting battle that recently emerged to reverse Democratic representation in several districts using unprecedented redistricting by the states in the middle of the decade? Put another way, in light of the constitutional authority of the states alone to do redistricting without interference from Congress, is there a way to guarantee how individual members of any legislature would vote on redistricting and to lock in the political neutrality that is the only reason a vote in only one House would be attractive?

I perhaps have the most to gain by seeing a full House vote finally come on my watch, but my primary obligation is to make sure that this option is what it appears to be constitutionally and pragmatically and to think through specifically and to be able to tell my constituents, how such action would help D.C. residents achieve representation in the Senate. This is a task I am about at the moment. There is almost nothing I can't do in the House, particularly given my voting rights in committee. The District's fundamental disempowerment lies in the Senate.

These bills are not ripe largely because there has not been an opportunity to explore many questions like these. Thus, Chairman Davis and I agreed that the best way to advance D.C. voting rights this year was with today's hearing to offer an opportunity to begin to look at and understand the bills that have been filed. Not surprisingly, I know of few people who are even generally familiar with these approaches or with the political realities that dictate whether they are achievable. The reason, of course, is that this is the first hearing to expose and explain them all. We believe this hearing is the appropriate way to begin. A hearing on four separate bills for congressional voting rights in and of itself is an important breakthrough in the struggle for full representation. In opening this new and important chapter, I am very

grateful to Chairman Tom Davis for his leadership, for his bill and for this hearing, to my colleagues Representatives Regula and Rohrabacher for their bills and for their contributions to today's hearings, and to my good friends from the District who will be testifying here today. ###

NORTON TAX DAY MESSAGE REMINDS CONGRESS AND THE NATION OF DEBT DUE D.C. FOR TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION AND SERVICE WITHOUT A VOTE

April 15, 2004

Washington, DC—On April 15, as Americans meet their tax obligations today, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) released the following statement to remind the Congress and the country that our government has always gotten 100 percent of the obligations of citizenship from D.C. residents but has always failed in its obligation to reciprocate with the basic rights every government owes to taxpaying citizens—voting representation in Congress. The Congresswoman's full statement follows.

This is tax day, but as the war in Iraq has reached a new crescendo, the District remembers first the members of the military from this city, who are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan without a vote. The city has lost three men in Iraq and Afghanistan, more than many states. Their sacrifice abroad occurs while their relatives, friends and neighbors here at home are paying more taxes per capita than the residents of 49 states. Far more than their taxes, the contributions and sacrifices of the men and women of the District, who have fought and died for their country, should summon national action to remove the scar of denial on democracy to the nation's capital. In the 20th century alone the District had more casualties in World War I than three states; in World War II, more casualties than four states; and in Vietnam, more casualties than 10 states.

Today, whether through peaceful intervention or war, the United States is insisting on one standard of democracy worldwide. Yet, the Congress—the purported guardian of democracy—stands out in the world for uniquely denying equal rights and congressional representation in its own proceedings to the citizens of its own capital. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States confirmed this injustice in a recent finding that the United States is in violation of international human rights law by denying congressional voting rights to D.C. residents.

However, there is reason for encouragement because of plans for three voting rights bills by my Republican colleagues in Congress and by recent elevated attention to D.C. voting rights through high-profile events—the high turnout of D.C. voters in the first-in-the-nation presidential primary in January, and the first airing of voting denial here on national TV, by C-SPAN when thousands of guests at the Democratic National Committee Unity Dinner last month saw a video about D.C. voting rights. I continue to believe that my own No Taxation Without Representation Act is the best vehicle for giving D.C. residents the full representation they deserve, but I welcome bills by Republican members. Only with bipartisan participation can we expect to produce a bill satisfactory to all. This year, especially, I am working with activists, city and other elected officials and political party leaders to take full advantage of the opportunities the presidential election year provides to press our voting rights case. Some exciting plans are in the works.

On this tax day when citizens have an obligation to pay the dues of citizenship to their government, we remind the President, the Congress and our fellow citizens that, in return, the government is overdue on its payment to us, the vote in the Congress. We use this day to remind them all that we will not rest until this old debt is wiped off from the books and our country can rightly claim the mantle of world leader for democracy for everyone everywhere.

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Notes From Congress

February 2004

A Column by Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton

First in the Nation Primary Helps Congress Focus on D.C. Voting Rights. "The District of Columbia's prospects for gaining full congressional representation are expanding exponentially thanks to a good turn-out at the D.C. primary," wrote the Hill, a newspaper for members of Congress. The first-in-the nation primary is still working because of a turnout nearly double what it was in the last presidential primary. National attention before and after the primary came because D.C. offered not merely a poll but the first indication of where real voters stood. Consequently, national and international media came calling to learn why we were first. D.C. activists did not seek a binding primary by going to the Democratic National Committee before the decisions were made, but in the end, it didn't much matter that the primary was non-binding. By holding the primary at the zenith of the primary season, the city assured the first exposure for voting rights beyond this region.

Roll Call, the other congressional newspaper, ran a long analysis of plans for two additional voting rights bills and a statehood bill. Planned are two bills sponsored by Republicans to join my No Taxation Without Representation bill—a bill

for a D.C. House seat only; another for a D.C. House and two Senate seats (with D.C. residents eligible to run and vote for Maryland senators), counted with the Maryland delegation for congressional voting purposes only (D.C. would remain independent for all other purposes); also a statehood bill (we achieved a good House vote on my 1993 statehood bill but can't try again until D.C. takes back the state costs it asked the federal government to assume during the fiscal crisis).

Rest assured that I'm continuing to gather sponsors for my own voting rights bill! Still, with the success of our primary and Republicans now competing with each other on voting rights bills, we have moved to a new level. The challenge is to agree on concrete ways to keep going until we get an agreeable and achievable bill. My goal is to take full advantage of presidential election year opportunities not otherwise available. I'm asking activists and elected officials to come together soon to discuss next steps.

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FLOOR STATEMENT ON VOTING RIGHTS FOR CITIZENS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

January 28, 2004

Mr. Speaker, the denial of voting rights to people in the District of Columbia who pay their taxes every day and are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan, and all around the world is finally sparking national attention, and even more important, it is sparking bills in the Congress. Bills not only from me and my side of the aisle, but I am pleased to note from my Republican friends.

Several Members are considering or have already put in bills [for] voting rights for the residents of the District of Columbia, and all of these are Republican bills and worth noting on this floor.

The first national interest comes, of course, from our "First in the Nation" primary. It was non-binding, but that did not much matter. People came out in double the numbers they came out in the 2000 Presidential primary. And they came out because the primary was in part a personal protest vote against paying taxes without representation here in the House, no representation in the Senate whatsoever, and yet serving as we have in our Armed Forces since our Nation was established, all without representation. Today, we are once again disproportionately represented in our Armed Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The bills, however, are not about protest. They are about a remedy. I am still gathering signatures, and am grateful to Members who have signed on to my No Taxation Without Representation Act, and I will continue to do so. Indeed, [my] bill got out of committee in the Senate a couple of years ago, and I certainly have not given up on it. But I do want to come to the floor this afternoon to say I welcome bills, especially the bills by my Republican friends, and I am very encouraged and will continue to work with them until we get a bill that everybody can agree upon.

My own bill, of course, would give representation in the House and the Senate for the District of Columbia. The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Tom Davis), Chair of the Committee on Government Reform, which has oversight for the District of Columbia, is considering a bill that would have a House-only seat.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Regula) has long favored and often in the past put in bills for voting rights. His is a retrocession bill. D.C. would return to the State of Maryland, if Maryland agreed, with Congress maintaining control over the Federal enclave.

And now the gentleman from California (Mr. Rohrabacher) has come forward with a bill that treats the District [residents], for purposes of voting rights only, as Maryland citizens. District residents could vote in Maryland, could run for the Maryland Senate seats. We would remain an independent jurisdiction and there would be no retrocession.

The gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Kucinich) has indicated that he is considering a statehood bill. The problem is that we had a vote on statehood in 1993, but the District had grave financial problems and had to give back State costs, so we do not presently qualify to become a State.

We are asking for voting representation because every citizen qualifies for representation in her legislature. As long as the Federal Government takes the money of the people I represent every April 15, as long as we have men and women fighting and dying abroad, and today especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is simply intolerable for there to be unequal representation.

For my constituents, this is pure and simple a question of disparate treatment, inequality of treatment and discrimination. At a time when we are insisting on democracy not only in Iraq but everywhere in the world, at some point people are going to point their fingers right at us and say, "Why do you not give the same democracy to the people who live closest to you, the people of your own Nation's capital?" To that, our only answer can be, "Duh?"

We do not have any answer. The fact that I have colleagues on the other side of the aisle, three of them, who have come forward with their own bills says to me that there is a gathering consensus that we can, in fact, move forward with a bill.

I am not going to abandon my bill at the moment. Ultimately all of these bills will come together, and I have no doubt that together we can find the solution to the last remaining and most intolerable scar on our democracy.

My thanks, finally and once again, to my colleagues, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Tom Davis), the gentleman from California (Mr. Rohrabacher), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Regula), and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Kucinich). ###
NORTON SAYS VOTERS DEFIED PRIMARY CRITICS AND MADE IT WORK FOR VOTING RIGHTS

Proposes Next Steps Meeting

January 14, 2004

Washington, DC—Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today said that yesterday's Democratic presidential voting rights primary "surpassed our best expectations and confounded critics who said the city would hold a first-in-the-nation primary and no one would come." She said, "Not only did residents come in unexpectedly large numbers; the American people came too with the first ever nationwide coverage of D.C. voting rights." Norton said all that the critics were right about was how the candidates would place in the preferences of voters. They were wrong, she said, about the turnout of voters and the extent to which attaching voting rights to the primary would offer an additional incentive to vote. Unofficial D.C. Board of Election results show that 16.3% of registered Democrats cast ballots in the primary yesterday, almost double the 8.3% of registered Democrats who voted in the presidential primary in 2000. Norton said that this turnout, coupled with the international and national attention on the message of the denial of democracy in the nation's capital, will help energize the movement to bring congressional voting representation to D.C. citizens.

The Congresswoman said she would work with elected and party officials and activists to hold a meeting shortly to discuss a series of next steps to build on the momentum of the voting rights primary and to further elevate the voting rights message.

"The success of the primary showed that talk about the shortcomings of the primary device that might have suppressed turnout and interest in the primary didn't discourage voters at all," Norton said. "We must do more to encourage activists and officials to use similar creativity in message and actions designed to achieve our voting rights. We will build on this new, wider exposure for our rights and use this presidential election year to increase support for full democracy and voting rights for D.C. residents." ### **NORTON & WILLIAMS PRESS DEAN TO PARTICIPATE IN PRE-PRIMARY DEBATE**

December 30, 2003

In a letter to presidential candidate, Howard Dean, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and Mayor Anthony Williams asked Dean to appear at a WTOP debate on January 9, 2004 that the two officials are co-sponsoring. Norton and Williams informed Dean that the other three candidates on the ballot have all agreed to participate in the January 9th debate, the only debate scheduled before D.C.'s first-in-the nation January 13th primary. The letter made a special request for Dean's participation, stressing that informing the country about the denial of congressional voting rights to D.C. residents "is the sole reason" for changing the date of the primary. Maximizing turnout would increase national consciousness about D.C.'s quest for voting rights and would benefit the candidates on the ballot, the two officials wrote.

The full text of the letter follows:

December 29, 2003

Dear Dr. Dean:

We in the District of Columbia appreciate your agreeing to be on the ballot for the District of Columbia January 13 primary. We understand that you are campaigning nationwide, and we are aware of the difficulty in making individual campaign stops as primaries approach in 2004. For this reason, we are making a special plea for you to appear personally at one debate on January 9, 2004, sponsored by WTOP, the only full-cycle news station in this region. The other candidates on the January 9 ballot have agreed to participate in this debate. The WTOP debate is the best opportunity to reach the largest number of residents who will be voting in the January primary. For this reason we have both agreed to cosponsor this debate.

Please remember that D.C. congressional voting rights is the sole reason for holding this advisory primary and our main reason for requesting your participation. The District has never before held its primary in January, and therefore many residents are not accustomed to coming to the polls during the cold winter months. Poor participation would not be good for voting rights, and as a candidate, you of course want maximum voter turnout.

The District primary complies with DNC rules, in no way affecting or displacing New Hampshire or Iowa, particularly considering that the purpose of the primary is to make Americans aware that tax paying residents including those serving

in the armed forces, are denied voting rights. What is particularly vexing and troubling to D.C. residents is that most Americans are unaware of the denial of basic rights to our residents. Please help us inform them by participating in the WTOP debate.

We very much hope to see you on Friday, January 9, 2004. Please be kind enough to let us know if you will be able to attend at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Holmes NortonAnthony Williams

Member of Congress Mayor ###